

LINKING LAYERS: IMPROVING ACCESS IN THE ATHENS CLASSIC CENTER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

*Multidimensional Strategies for Walkability and
Connectivity in Complex Urban Environments*

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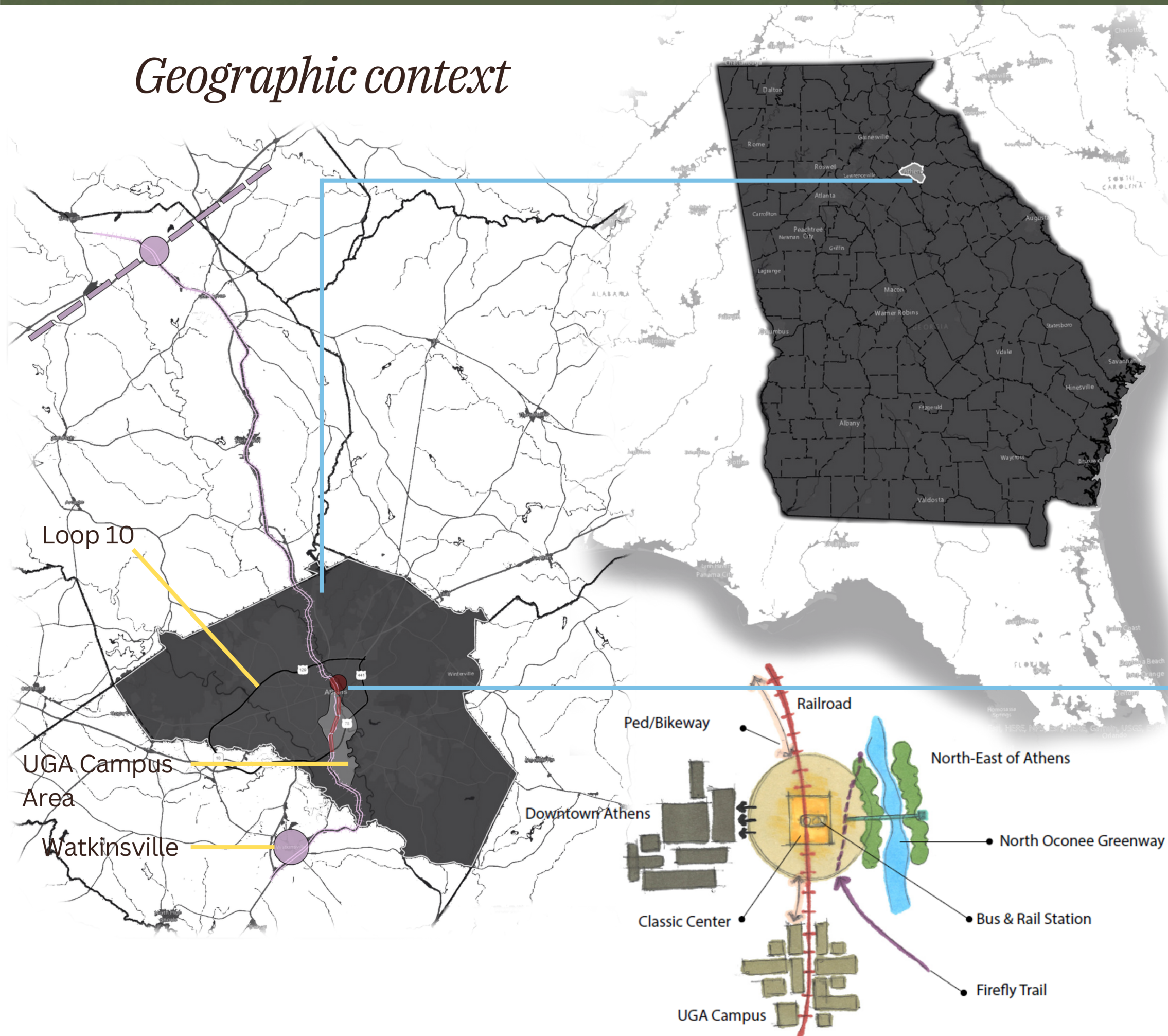
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■ AGENDA

- 01 . *Geographic Context*
- 02 . *Challenges & Research Focus*
- 03 | *Case Studies Inspiration*
- 04 | *Design Framework (Five Layers)*
- 05 | *Conclusion*

Geographic context



Central location linking UGA, Downtown, and Northeast of Athens

Its position makes it a vital node that exposes the challenges of navigating a steep, multi-level terrain.

Why it Matters

Mixed-use entertainment district on a 100-ft elevation slope.

Growing population + pedestrian safety challenges.

Athens' Comprehensive Plan supports walkability but lacks vertical strategies.

Personal connection: walking as a car-free international student.



Current Barriers

Lack of connectivity on the
Oconee River



Fragmented Sidewalk



Discontinuation of Firefly
Trail



Narrow Sidewalk, Poor
Walkability



A: Missing cross-river link and topographical
challenge

B: Disconnection and lack of seamless walkability

C: Interruption of the key pedestrian network

D: Everyday usability + Safety concern

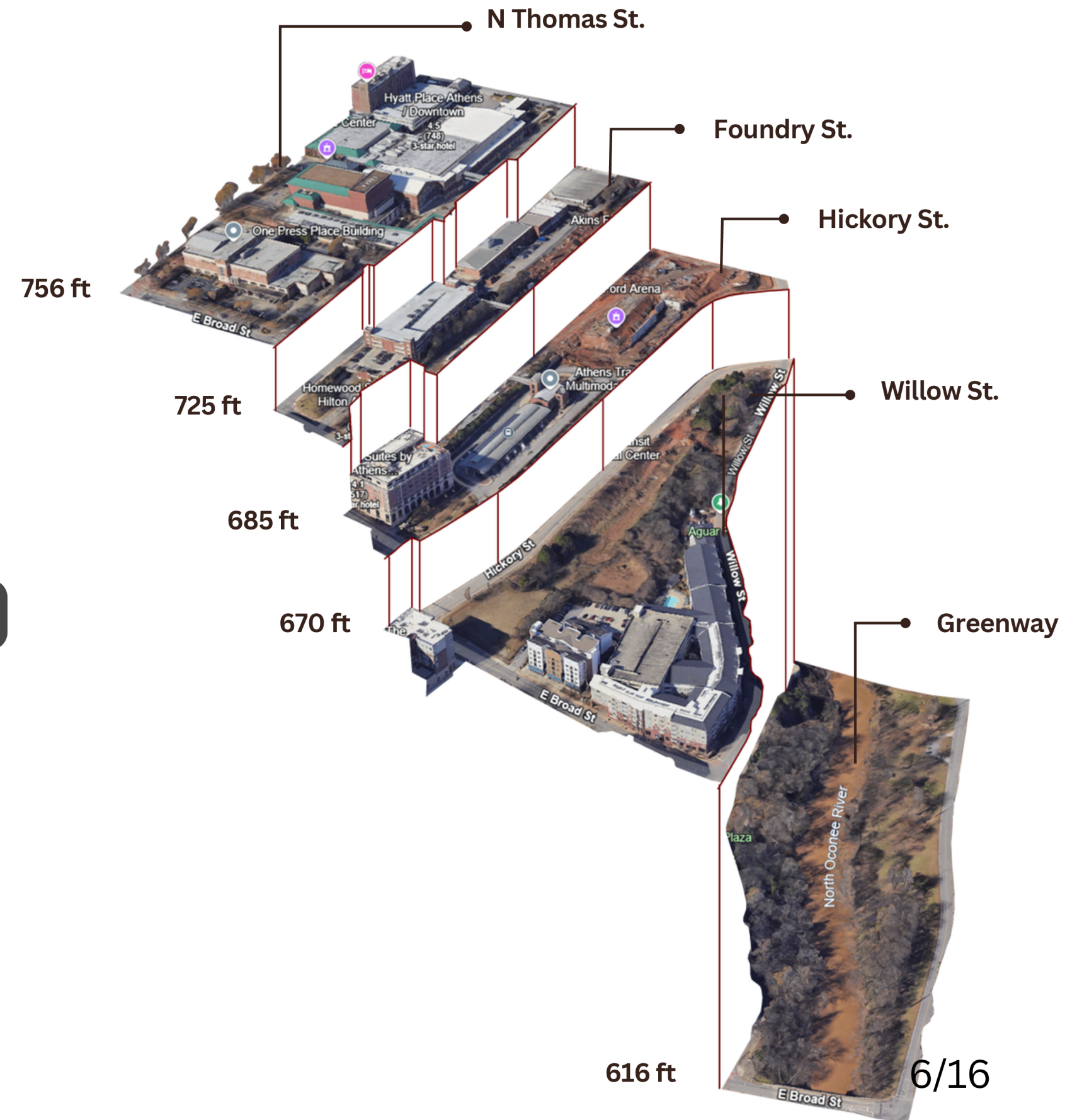
Research Focus

Examines physical, functional, and temporal layers of movement across the district.

Focuses on linking movement and circulation from the Greenway to North Thomas Street across five elevation levels.

Addresses horizontal, vertical, and sloped access challenges.

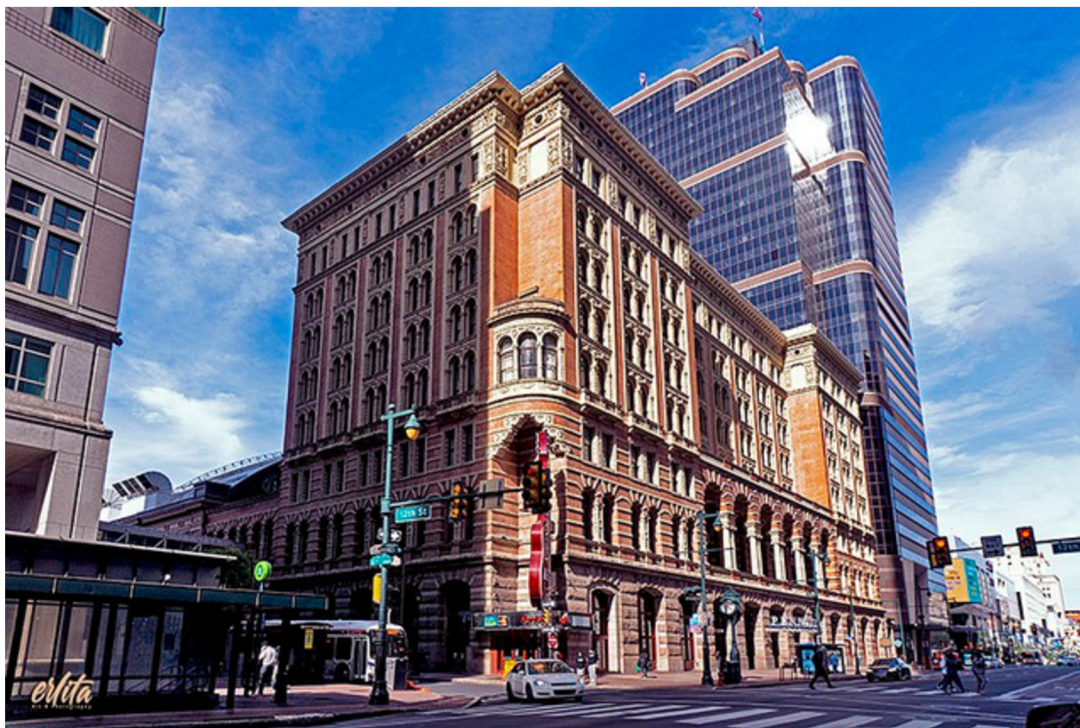
Proposed a multidimensional pedestrian framework with design strategies such as funiculars, skybridges, improved sidewalks, and intuitive wayfinding to enhance connectivity and access.



Case study Inspiration

1

Denver Union Station



Multi-level pedestrian circulation tied to transit.

2

Marine Gateway



Layered public realm with vertical integration.

3

Reading Terminal



Blends event-driven and daily pedestrian flow.

Design Framework-Linking Layers

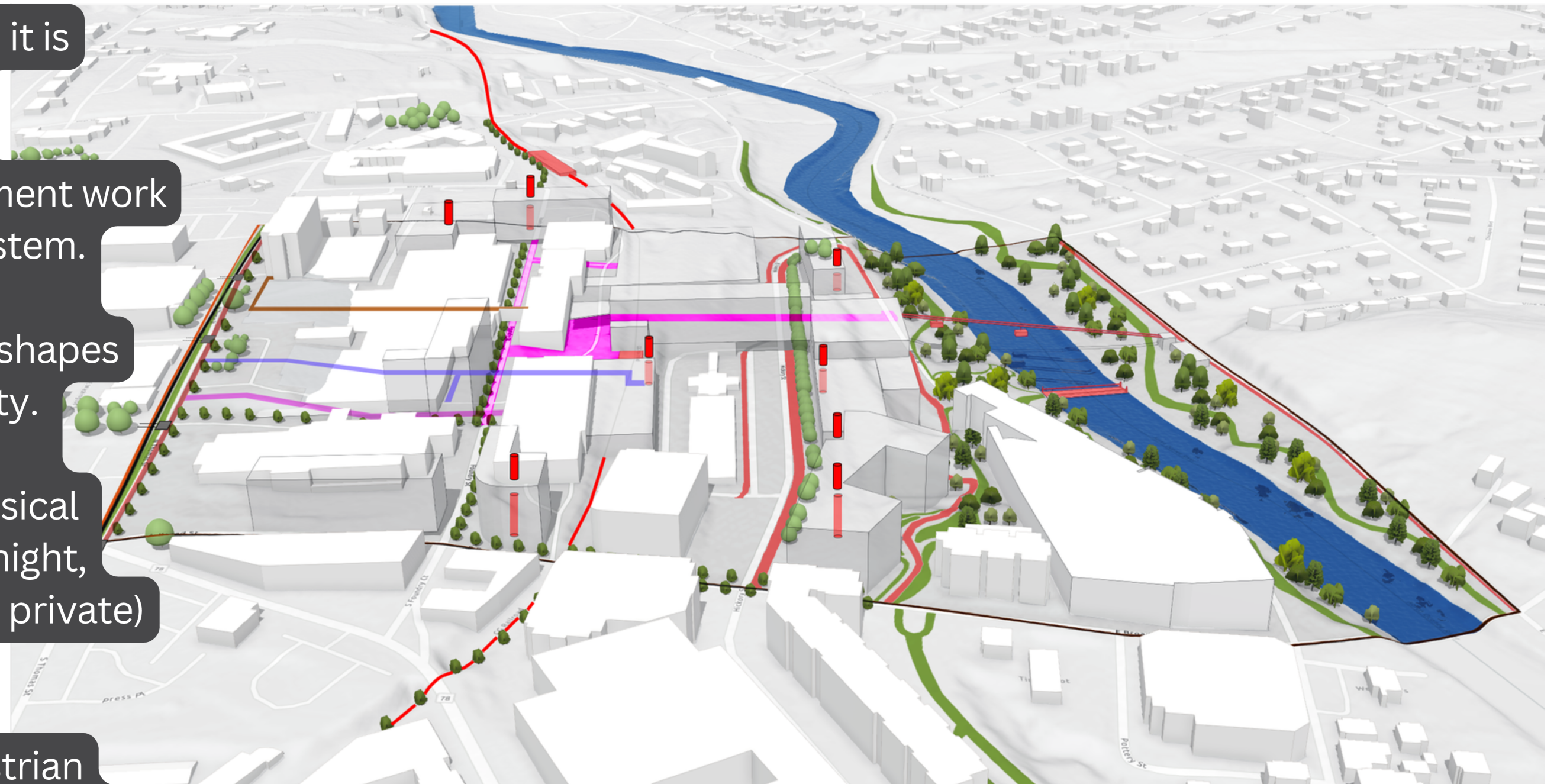
Walkability in Athens isn't flat; it is layered and interconnected.

Vertical and horizontal movement work together as one integrated system.

A Human-centered approach shapes access, safety, and accessibility.

The framework integrates physical (topography), temporal (day, night, event), and functional (public, private) dimensions.

Goal: create a seamless pedestrian network adaptable to complex urban forms.

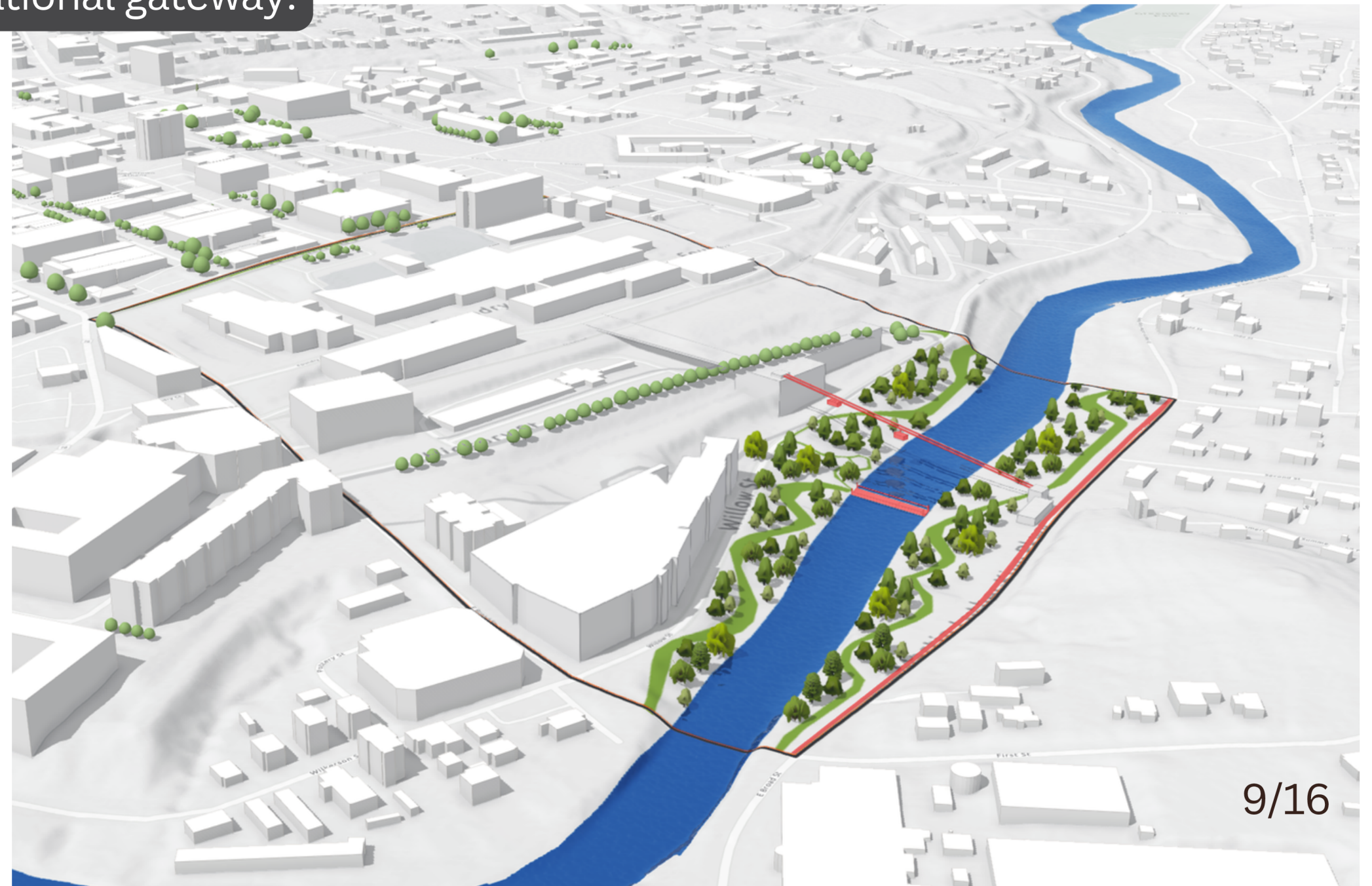
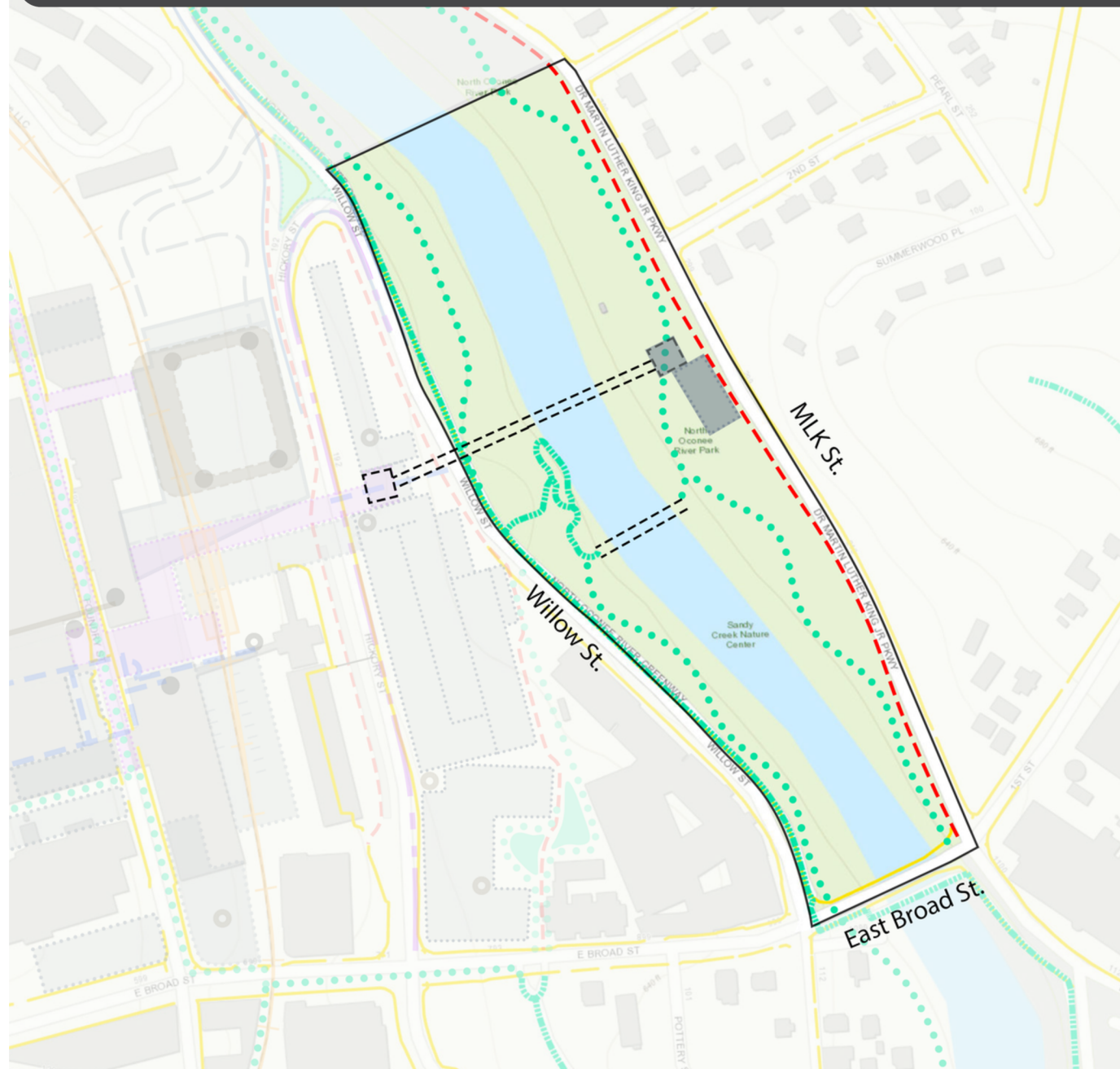


Strategies by layer

Connecting to Nature and Movement:

Strengthen sidewalk and trail continuity along the river.
Add a pedestrian bridge linking both banks.
Introduce a funicular connecting to the upper layers.
Activate this lowest level as a social and recreational gateway.

Layer 1: Greenway Level



Strategies by layer

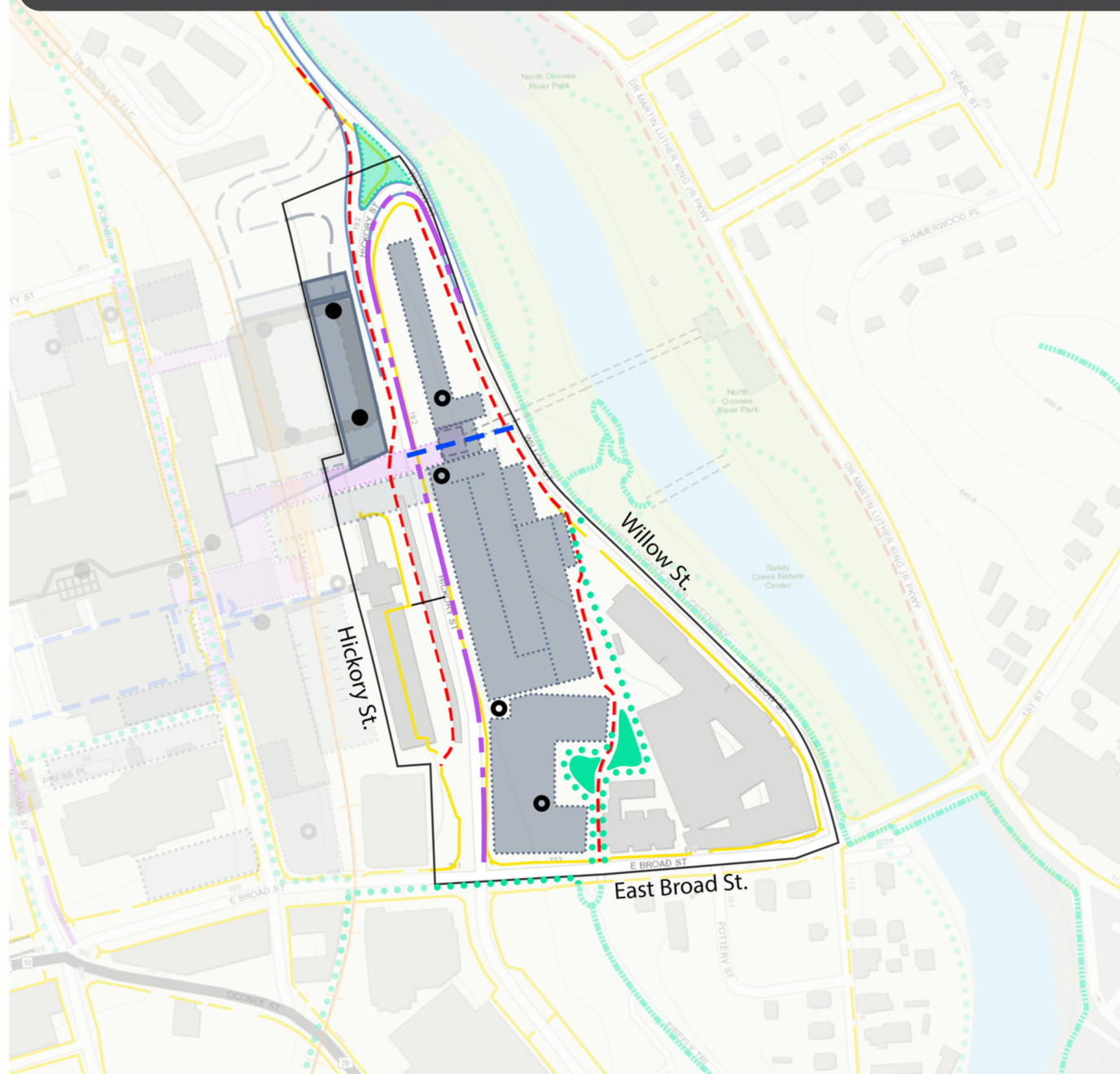
A transitional Spine

Extend the Firefly Trail into the site.

Provide elevators and stairs linking the lower and upper levels.

Enhance sidewalks and intersections for accessibility.

Integrate green medians and trees to create comfort and identity.

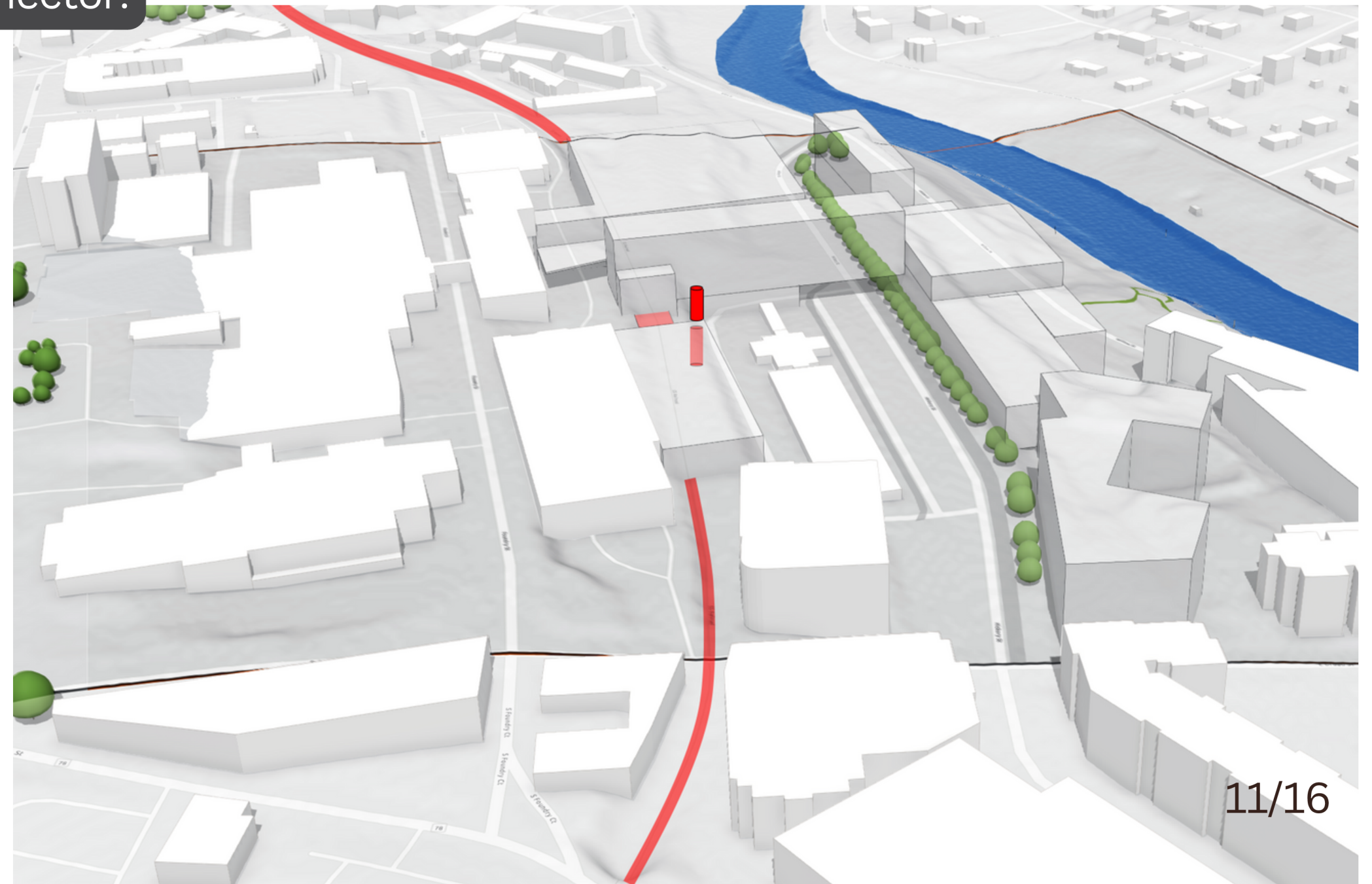
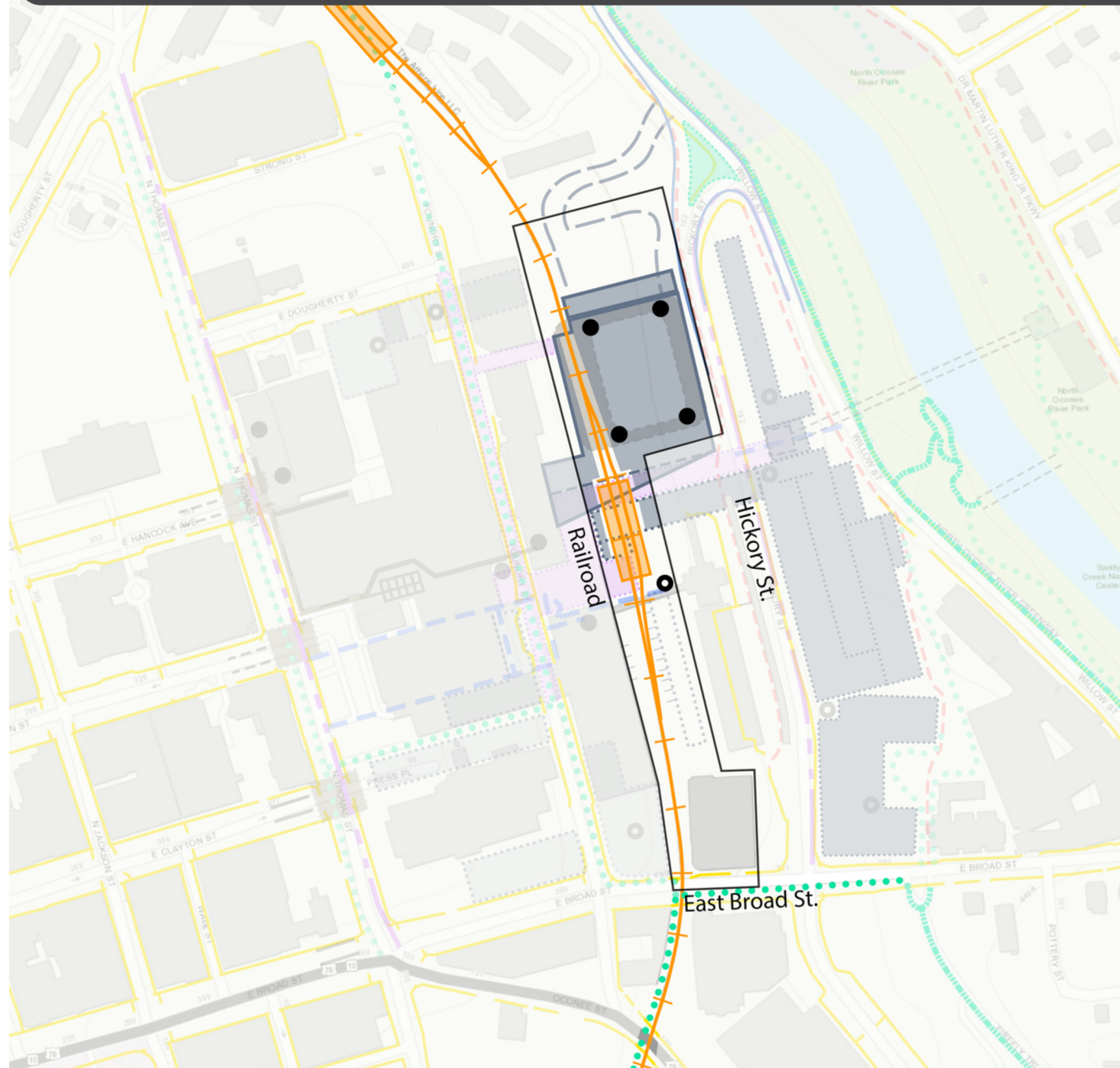


Strategies by layer

Layer 3: Hickory St. /Railroad

Transit Readiness and Reuse

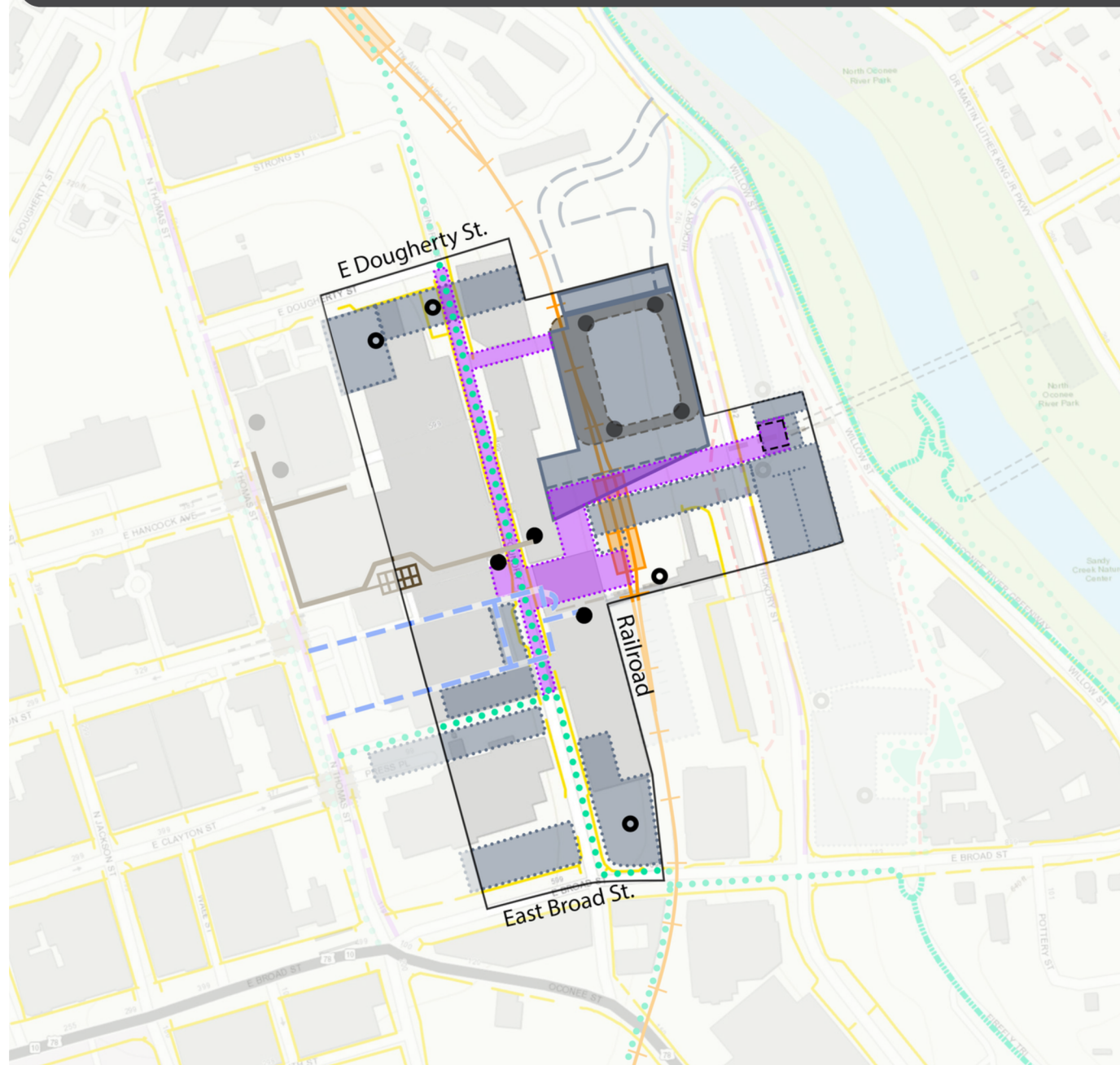
Reuse the former rail corridors as a pedestrian and micro-mobility route.
Prepare space for a future streetcar line.
Reinforce connections to the multimodal hub and Arena.
Turn this mid-layer into an active mobility connector.



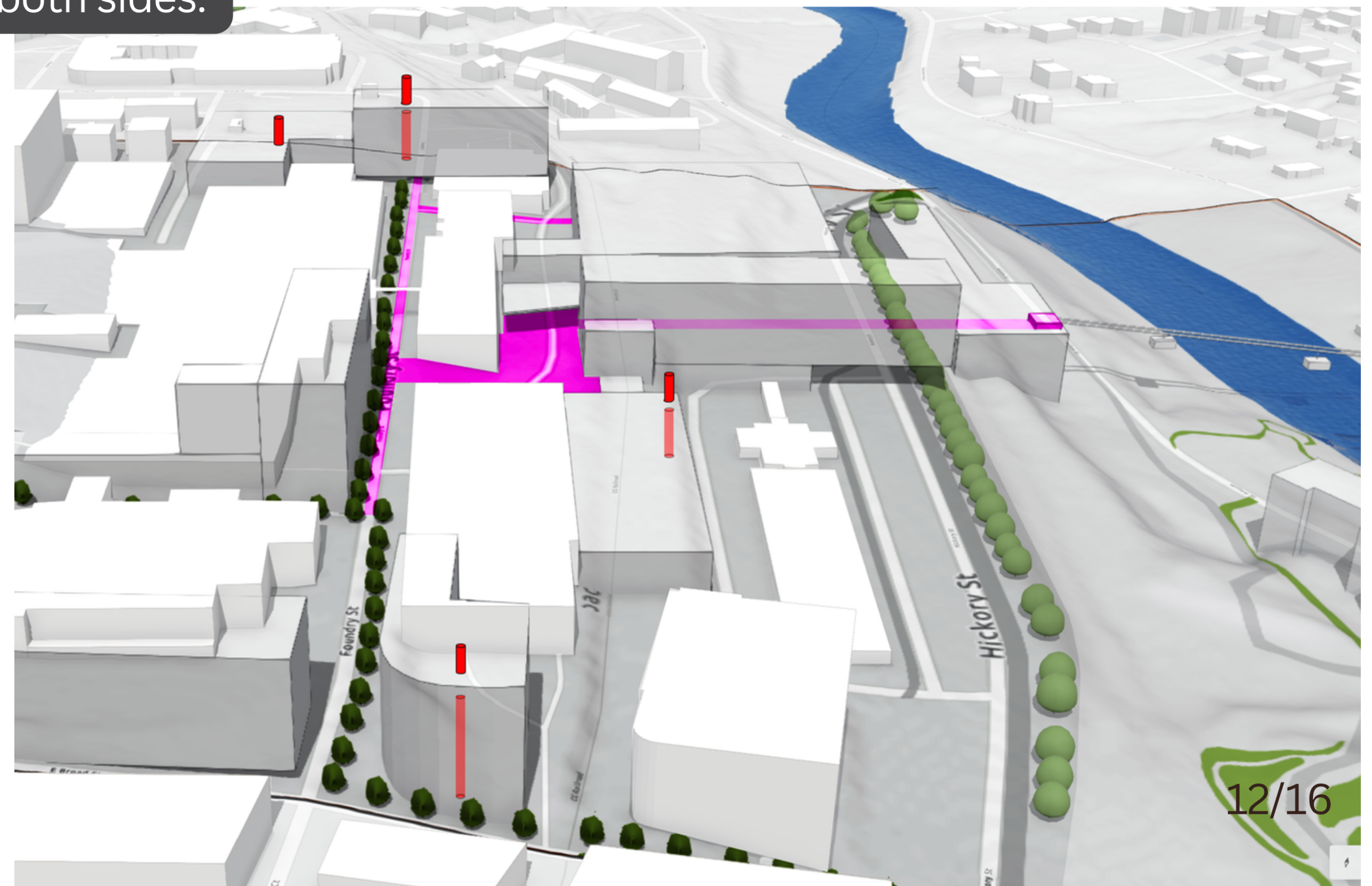
Strategies by layer

The Central Public Plaza

Create an elevated plaza connecting event and daily life.
Bridge to the bus center and adjacent transit stops.
Integrate gentle ramps, clear lighting, and intuitive wayfinding.
Extend the Firefly Trail across the plaza to link both sides.



Layer 4: Foundry St.

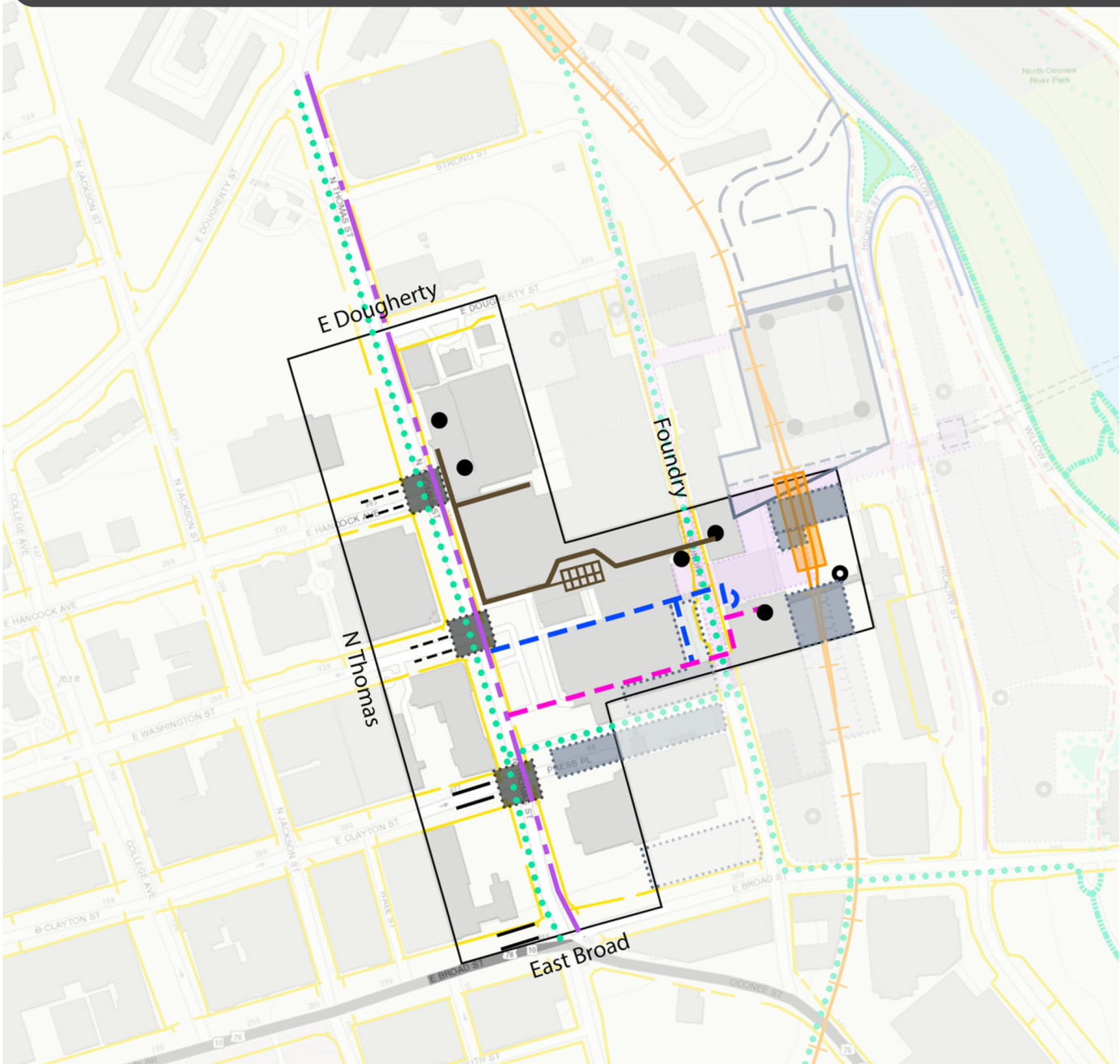


Strategies by layer

Reconnecting Downtown

Repair and widen sidewalks with shade and greenery.
Add raised crossings and safer intersections.
Create interior access through the Classic Center atrium.
Complete the vertical loop from Greenway to Downtown.

Layer 5: N. Thomas St.



All Layers: One Connected Framework

Integrated Movement System

Together, these five layers form a multidimensional pedestrian network.

The design bridges physical, temporal, and functional gaps, linking greenway trails, transit nodes, event venues, and downtown streets into one continuous experience.

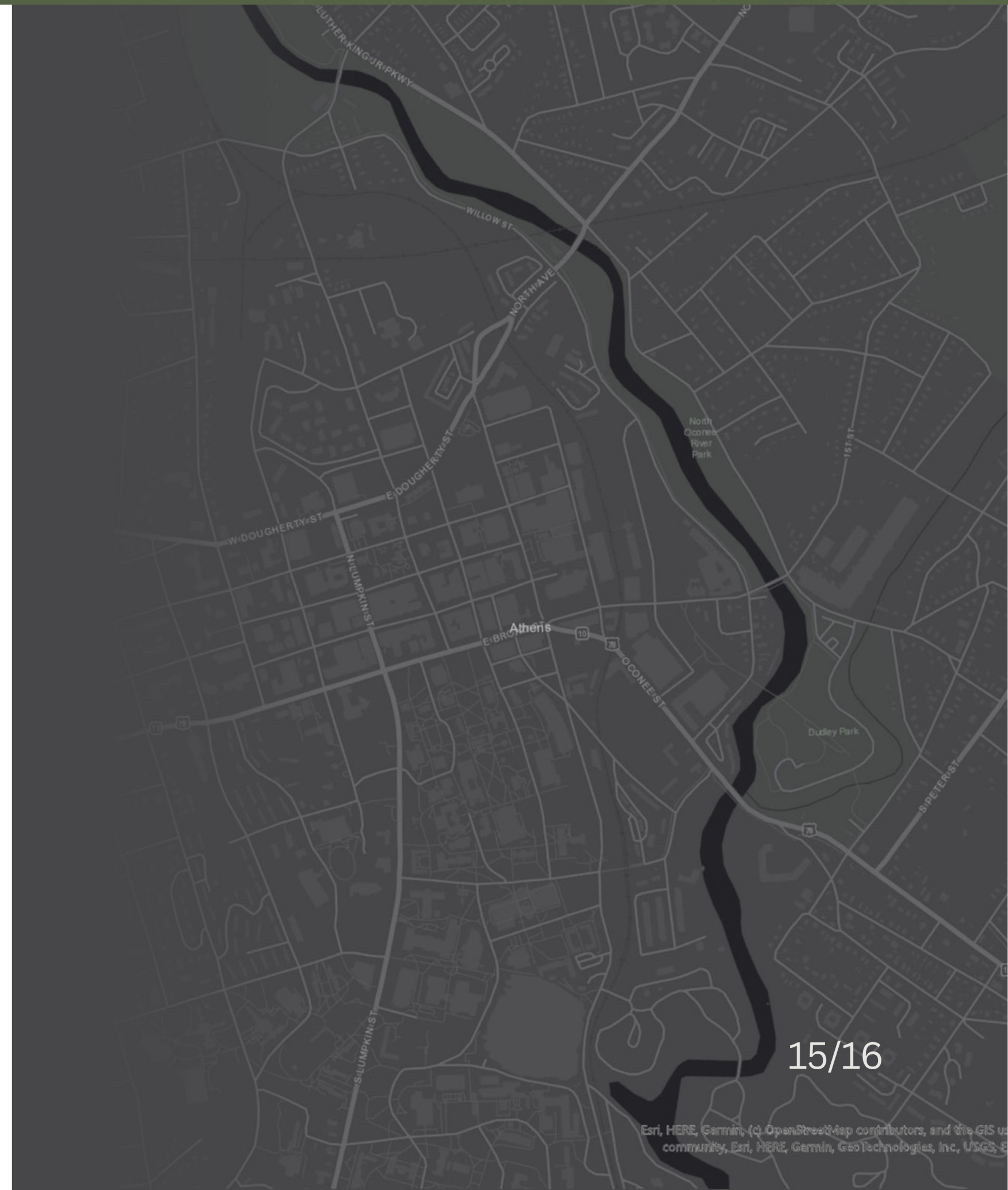


Conclusion

Beyond Flat Walkability

This study reimagines walkability for cities built on slopes. By connecting multiple layers instead of a single plane, Athens shows how access, safety, and vibrancy can work together through multidimensional design.

Topography, once seen as a barrier, becomes an opportunity to shape richer, more connected urban movement.



THANK YOU

For Listening

and Special Thanks to my advisor, Professor John (Jack) Crowley